

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Categorical Exclusion
DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2015-0028-CX**

PREPARING OFFICE

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Categorical Exclusion

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Prepared by
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Vernal Field Office
Vernal, UT

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Decision Record - Memorandum

Compliance

This selected action is in conformance with the Vernal Field Office Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (BLM 2008).

There are no comprehensive State of Utah plans for the vicinity of the selected action. However, the State of Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) have leased much of the nearby state land for oil and gas production. Because the objectives of SITLA are to produce funding for the state school system, and because production on federal leases could further interest in drilling on state leases in the area, it is assumed that the selected alternative is consistent with the objectives of the State.

Selected Action

XTO proposes to place a deep-well cathodic protection system at three (3) locations in Township 10 South Ranges 19 and 20 East. Dependant upon ground conductivity, one to two wells of 10" in diameter and 140' deep would be drilled and infrastructure installed at each location. Associated infrastructure would include an electrical junction box, rectifier, meter, transformer, and solar panel if electricity is not available on site already. The three (3) locations are existing disturbance associated with oil and gas development, specifically, pipelines authorized by ROW and/or APD. All sites are within the Riverbend Unit and associated with previously authorized actions.

Compliance with NEPA

The Non-Substantial Deviation listed above does not require the preparation of an Environmental Assessment, as it has been found to not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. The applicable Categorical Exclusion reference is in 516 DM 11.9 E (13). This reference, E (13) states, "Amendments to existing rights-of-way, such as the upgrading of existing facilities, which entail no additional disturbances outside the right-of-way boundary."

Rationale

The subject lands were leased for oil or gas development under authority of the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as modified by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, and the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987. The lessee/operator has the right to explore for oil and gas on the lease as specified in 43 CFR 3103.1-2, and if a discovery is made, to produce oil and/or natural gas for economic gain.

The selected alternative meets the BLM's need to acknowledge and allow development of valid existing leases. The BLM objective to reduce impacts is met by the imposing of mitigation measures to protect other resource values.

Appeal or Protest Opportunities

This decision is effective upon the date it is signed by the authorized officer. The decision is subject to appeal. Under BLM regulation, this decision is subject to administrative review in

accordance with 43 CFR 3165. Any request for administrative review of this decision must include information required under 43 CFR 3165.3(b) (State Director Review), including all supporting documentation. Such a request must be filed in writing with the State Director, Bureau of Land Management, Utah State Office, P.O. Box 45155, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84145-0155, within 20 business days of the date this Decision is received or considered to have been received.

If you wish to file a petition for stay, the petition for stay should accompany your notice of appeal and shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

1. The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied;
2. The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits;
3. The likelihood of irreparable harm to the appellant or resources if the stay is not granted; and,
4. Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

Conditions of Approval

- All action will take place within existing disturbance originally authorized by APD or ROW,
- No access will be constructed between the RBU 5–11F access road and cathodic wells.

Authorizing Official

/s/ Jerry Kenczka

Jerry Kenczka
AFM for Minerals

12/29/2014

Date

Chapter 1. XTO Pipeline Cathodic Protection

DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2015-0028-CX

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A. Background

BLM Office: Vernal FO

Lease/Serial/Case File No.:

Proposed Action Title/Type:XTO Pipeline Cathodic Protection

Location of Proposed Action: The proposed action will take place at the three following locations: (1) RBU 14–17E at SESW, section 17, T10S, R19E, SLB&M; (2) Tap 5 Compressor Site at NESW, section 2, T10S, R20E, SLB&M; (3) RBU 5–11F at SWNW, section 11, T10S, R20E, SLB&M.

The cathodic well(s) to be drilled on the RBU 14–17E location will be on the existing gas well pad, no additional surface disturbance is required. The pad surface is consistent with industry standards for oil and gas operation in the Uintah Basin, being a level and clear surface, of about 1.4 acres, capable of supporting production and maintenance activities which occur on wells and associated infrastructure. The proposed wells will be on the west edge of the pad, clear from normal operating and maintenance traffic.

The cathodic well(s) to be drilled on the Tap 5 Compressor Site location will be within the existing associated pipeline corridor; this corridor is for an on-unit pipeline related to the compressor site. The proposed wells will be located just off the NW corner of the compressor site pad, within the pipeline corridor, and fully on existing disturbance; the surface is regularly disturbed by vehicle traffic associated with a local pipeline servicing access point (pig launcher).

The well(s) to be drilled on the RBU 5–11F site will be on previously disturbed surface associated with the on-unit buried pipeline associated with closed ROW UTU-49205; the ROW was closed when the area was unitized. The surface is relatively flat and located about 100 feet west of the access road for the RBU 5–11F gas well pad.

Description of Proposed Action: XTO proposes to place a deep-well cathodic protection system at three (3) locations in Township 10 South Ranges 19 and 20 East. The cathodic system would help protect buried pipe in the area from ground corrosion. Dependant upon ground conductivity, one to two wells of 10" in diameter and 140' deep would be drilled and infrastructure installed at each location. The surface around each well, of about 64 square feet, would be cleared, leveled, and graveled. A guard rail will be installed to protect well head(s) from vehicular traffic collisions. Drilling of the well would be conducted using a truck mounted rig similar to those used in drilling water wells. The bore hole would contain duriron anodes, coke breeze, and bentonite pellets. Surface casing will be schedule 40 PVC, cemented in place if necessary. Associated infrastructure would include an electrical junction box, rectifier, meter, transformer, and solar panel if electricity is not available on site already. Total drilling and construction time is expected to take no more than two (2) standard work days per well. Maintenance on the wells is expected to be minimal, requiring infrequent truck traffic.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: UT - Vernal RMP

Date Approved/Amended: October, 2008

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s): MIN—2: Mineral and energy resource exploration and development surface-disturbing activities will be allowed in the VPA unless precluded by other program prescriptions. The stipulations identified for surface-disturbing activities in Appendix K will generally apply to these activities.

C. Compliance with NEPA:

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 2, Appendix 1, or 516 DM 11.9 E (13). This reference, E (13) states, “Amendments to existing rights-of-way, such as the upgrading of existing facilities, which entail no additional disturbances outside the right-of-way boundary.”

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2 apply.

D. Approval and Contact Information

/s/ Jerry Kenczka

12/29/2014

Jerry Kenczka
AFM for Minerals

Date

Contact Person

Nicholas Day
Physical Scientist
Vernal Field Office
170 South 500 East
Vernal, UT, 84078
435.781.4400

Appendix A. Extraordinary Circumstances Documentation

Categorical Exclusion Rationale

CX Number:	DOI-BLM-UT-G010-2015-0028-CX
Date:	December 2014
Lease/Case File/ Serial Number:	
Regulatory Authority (CFR or Law):	

Section 1.1 Impacts on Public Health and Safety

1. Does the proposed action have significant impacts on public health and safety?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	x	Nicholas Day / Physical Scientist

Rationale:

Section 1.2 Impacts on Natural Resources or Unique Geographic Characteristics

2. Does the proposed action have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness or wilderness study areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds (Executive Order 13186); and other ecologically significant or critical areas?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	x	Nicholas Day / Physical Scientist

Rationale: The proposed action is taking place within an existing developed oil and gas field and will be on existing disturbance associated with oil and gas operations. The area has been cleared of historical and/or cultural resources and is not within any designated unit of park, refuge, wilderness, or other identified feature listed above.

Section 1.3 Level of Controversy

3. Does the proposed action have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)]?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	x	Nicholas Day / Physical Scientist

Rationale: There are not any known unresolved controversial environmental effects associated with the action.

Section 1.4 Highly Uncertain or Unique or Unknown Environmental Risks

4. Does the proposed action have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	x	Nicholas Day / Physical Scientist

Rationale: Cathodic protection is a common practice with the effects intensely studied.

Section 1.5 Precedent Setting

5. Does the proposed action establish a precedent for future action, or represent a decision in principle about future actions, with potentially significant environmental effects?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	x	Nicholas Day / Physical Scientist

Rationale:

Section 1.6 Cumulatively Significant Effects

6. Does the proposed action have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	x	Nicholas Day / Physical Scientist

Rationale: This action will increase the life expectancy of the pipeline, effectively decreasing the need for more intensive maintenance or replacement activities, to include reduction of risk of pipeline failure due to corrosion.

Section 1.7 Impacts on Cultural Properties

7. Does the proposed action have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the Bureau or office?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	Erin Goslin / Archaeologist

Rationale: There are no archaeological sites in the vicinity of these three wells.

Section 1.8 Impacts on Federally Listed Species or Critical Habitat

8. Does the proposed action have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	TECP Plants: Christine Cimiluca / Acting Botanist

Rationale: TECP Plants: The proposed cathodic protection wells are all proposed within the 2013 polygon established by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as potential habitat for threatened plant species Uinta Basin hookless cactus (*Sclerocactus wetlandicus*) and Pariette cactus (*Sclerocactus brevispinus*). The proposed location in Sec. 17, T10S R19E is within potential habitat designated as Core 2 for the two species. However, the proposed wells and associated infrastructure would be located on existing disturbance, and would not require

additional surface disturbance. The proposed project does not occur within suitable habitat for any other threatened, endangered, candidate or proposed plant species. Therefore, the project would not have significant impacts on threatened, endangered, candidate or proposed plant species or their designated Critical Habitat.

Section 1.9 Compliance With Laws

9. Does the proposed action violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	x	Nicholas Day / Physical Scientist

Rationale: No laws are or will be violated as a direct result of this action.

Section 1.10 Environmental Justice

10. Does the proposed action have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898)?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	x	Nicholas Day / Physical Scientist

Rationale:

Section 1.11 Indian Sacred Sites

11. Does the proposed action limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners, or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007)?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	Erin Goslin / Archaeologist

Rationale: No Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs) are identified within the APE. The proposed project will not hinder access to or use of Native American religious sites.

Section 1.12 Noxious and Non-Native Invasive Species

12. Does the proposed action contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area, or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)?		
YES	NO	REVIEWER/TITLE
	X	Christine Cimiluca / Acting Botanist

Rationale: The operator is responsible for implementing a weed control plan on all disturbed areas, including mechanical removal, and/or the use of an approved Pesticide use Proposal (PUP). Since the proposed project would be located on existing disturbances where weed control is already required, the Proposed Action is not anticipated to contribute to the introduction, continued existence or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive plant species.

Section 1.2 Preparer Information

Nicholas L. Day
PREPARER

12/29/2014
DATE

Physical Scientist
TITLE